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Ex nihilo nihil fit.

While in the act of framing a subject to form the essay which we were this day bound to supply, we were led into a train of reflections obviously dictated by the pressing necessities of our case. It is an old proverb, but more venerable by its antiquity, that each finds his own task beset with the mightiest labors,

and frowning with the sturdiest opposition. Yet, without denying the truth of the maxim, surely his is not the least of encumbrances, the effusions of whose mind are to be poured forth without remedy, at the call of circumstances which prudence cannot alter, and circumspection cannot avert. Authorship, to whatever sphere its action may be confined, is like a fathomless gulph, upon which when once embarked, we are urged forward by inevitable fate, without the chances of deliverance from cool reflection, a momentary delay. Here the writer may in secret deplore those errors which he had not the time to avoid, nor opportunity to correct; yet these excuses answer no purpose at the bar of public decision, where facts and not intentions are the criterion of irrevocable judgment. The hurry of an hour; the importunities of the press; the clamor of impatience; may serve to embitter the reflections of private meditation, but are of little avail, when the faults for which they plead have passed the sentence which

can never be recalled.

But, in the midst of these disadvantages under which those of our walk must incessantly labor, the voice of criticism is not content with simply pronouncing upon our efforts as they come, but must busy herself in calling up the long catalogue of benefits which we have omitted to record, or evils which we have neglected to censure. Accordingly, as if more closely to crowd the straitened path in which we are pursuing our labors; while endeavoring to embrace within the limits of our notice, whatever needs the task of us to register, and of others to peruse; yet, still, the majority of those who think it worth their while to intermeddle with our affairs, seem, most of all, to sicken at the themes of our periodical investigation. We are told that we are too dry to be relished, and too grave for our occupation: that we touch upon those departments, in which few can follow our career, and omit those lighter and more general topics of concern, which it

is our necessary duty to record: and we have before us the letter of a recent correspondent, who wonders that the fashions of our time, and the manners of our land, have not formed the object of a single remark.

Dr Johnson observes, that, of all departments of literary labor, the essayist chooses the lightest in its difficulties, because the most universal in its plan. Admitting that they who in this country pursue this avocation, were gifted in every respect with powers equal to those of the mighty master of human reason, they would find his calculations fall vastly short of the most sanguine hopes, which self-love or vanity could lead them to entertain. In those regions of aristocracy and rank, where he loomed in the magnificence of intellectual greatness, and in other climes endowed with the same national institutions, we readily admit the truth of the proposition which experience

compelled him to maintain. In the wide circle of the European world, both continental and insular, where the several grades of elevation in the scale of public distinction, are marked by so unerring a line; where each order of men, from the throne to the cottage, is so vastly distant, in the nature of its habits, the fashions of its life, and the magnitude of its prospects; we are presented with a mark for observation, at which thousands of moral censors might shoot the arrows of ridicule and invective, and make no visible impression on the whole. They have not there the thankless office of exposing follies of which none are ignorant, and ~~ridiculing~~ laughing at customs whose prevalence is too common to be noticed. Each, in his own peculiar rank, aiming his weapons at the sphere in which he moves, makes his stings felt alone where they are

intended. In such a state of society, the Essayist is regarded as the only accurate medium, through which the manners of a single part may be spread with the charm of novelty through the whole. The exertions of the writer find their ready effect, in forcing conviction upon some, and contributing to the pleasure of all.

But a single eye-glance through the national ~~character~~ character of the land in which we live, the principles of her constitution, and the disposition of her government, prove beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the two cases do not admit of a parallel. It is of no avail to wield the pen against manners, where there are no distinctions to be found, or declaim against the prevalence of follies, which are no sooner started, than they spread like the light of heaven, through every corner where a habitation can be found. The splendors by which Fashion endeav-

as to make riches and poverty shine out by visible contrast, are confounded in this land of universal equality, where rank can have nothing to itself, and every thing becomes the common lot. The whole mass, whatever may its private shades of difference, is the same in public appearance: so that to inveigh against the customs of a particular rank, would lie, in effect, to point the shaft at what never had a real existence, among the new-formed regulations of the western world.

The Egyptians on the other side of the water, possess another advantage over us, in point of interest, which adds considerable weight to the balance in their favor. The sacred associations which they derive from the antiquity of every thing about them, furnish a perpetual theme, upon which to string their heart in unison with the finest feel-

ings of which our nature is professed. We, on the contrary, who have sprung up but at a recent date; having no past scenes upon which to turn our meditations, in connection with the present; can boast of no local attachments, as the subjects of pleasing delight, and soothing recollection. Every thing belonging to us as a people, is, on this account, as yet bleak, barren, and comfortless, without settled enjoyment, or social feeling. To abstract and general principles the writer here, must therefore from necessity resort, for amusement to the frivolous, and instruction to the grave.

But, if we judge of truth by the complaints which are sounded, we fulfil nothing if we touch not manners. That morality, clothed in the sober dress which is its native habiliment, presents the

some aspect from age to age, and unfolds the principles of her government in maxims which can never vary, and readily and willingly allow. Indeed, it would be a strange and inexplicable mystery in the system of heavenly legislation, if the code of laws which are ordained for man to follow, were not founded upon truths of eternal duration, and framed after a fashion which never can be changed. But, certainly, it will be time enough to scoff at moral instruction, in whatever part it may appear, when crime shall cease to drench the universe in blood, and vice, corruption, and guilt, shall be names unheard upon the earth.

This however, is but a part of that duty

which the Essayist undertakes to fulfil. To dive into the treasures of the days that are gone; to call out learning from her hiding-places, and muse a little on the lustre of her charms to face back on recollections to the greatness of those ~~&~~ times which have fled ~~like~~ as the present are doomed to fly, and make the glory of former ages live in the homage of the living world; can surely be esteemed a task by no means unworthy of us to perform, and of others to follow. To those who as yet have found no relish from the ~~pursuit~~ meditation of so ennobling a pursuit, it may be as well to remark, that the time yet remains to learn that ignorance might answer better in a wider age, and should in justice shrink beneath the dazzling effulgence of the light that dawns on these propitious times. It is but a sorry sample of the ~~pretensions~~ qualifications

tions of our Laconic corespon-
dent, that he flies from the
gravity of classical dis-cussion,
to the emptiness of frivolous
gratification, and prefers
the broad grin of vulgar
merriment, to the sterner
features of substantial
truth. His aspirations must
in reality be confined to
a narrow sum, who would
make laughter the business
of life, and burn the trea-
sure of the soul. The wise
man has told us, that
there is a time for every
purpose under the sun.
It is doubtless no trifling
addition to the pleasures
of existence, to indulge at
the season of mirth, in
the disposition which its
presence should inspire: but
to cut down every dis-
tinction of time, place, and

propriety, and ~~jest~~ wear out life in an endless jest; is to undermine the foundation of virtue, and mock the dignity of truth.

Q.